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Is the Devil in Modern Amusements ?

J. E. CONANT

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Is the Devil in Modern Amusements ?

By

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FOREWORD

CHURCH members in ever increasing numbers are indulging in the card game, the dance, the theatre and the picture show.

Some are doing so, especially among untaught young people, who seem to have no thought that these things are supposed to be wrong.

They may have heard remarks to that effect, but not knowing the moral and spiritual principles by which these things are to be judged, they conclude that those who raise the questions simply do not know, because they do not engage in them. Their participation in them is therefore with little or no question of conscience.

Some there are who shun everything but what they call the clean pictures shown in the picture theatre, who, because ignorant of the principles by which to estimate these things, say they see no good reason for staying away from the historical and other fine educational pictures, just because evil pictures are shown also. They never go to the bad pictures anyway, and why be deprived of the good ones?

This discussion, while it is for everyone who is interested in reading it, is especially for church members who indulge in these amusements.

Readers who are not Christians need not be surprised if they find it difficult, or even impossible, to see the principles set forth, or their application to the solution of the amusement problem. Some may see the logic and application of the principles, who will yet seek to evade the conclusions reached. The reason is not far to find. The unsaved simply *must* have something to help them ease

the insufferable pain of living. They would hardly look to the church for such relief, for there they would find only the added pain of contact with truth disobeyed, which is the one pain they are seeking to escape. The logical thing is therefore to seek ease in forgetfulness by giving their spare time to what the world has to offer. And some, that they may avoid the feeling of wrong-doing, will seek ease of conscience by the old argument that they see no harm in these amusements.

The church member who has really been born again, and is seeking to live as a Christian should, will be able to see both the principles and their application to Christian living as soon as they are presented. He received a heavenly nature in his new birth, and that nature has a pair of spiritual eyes with which such things *can* be seen.

The church member, therefore, who does not see these principles and their application as they are set forth in the Word, compels the conclusion that his lack of spiritual vision is either because he has never been born again, or else that his carnal nature, which loves these things of the world, is dominant in his life, with the vision of the spiritual nature beclouded.

But no matter what the case may be with individual readers, the situation in the church at large calls for a sufficiently comprehensive inquiry into the principles involved to enable every reader, whatever his personal slant on the problem, to see the application of the principles to his own viewpoint, reach his own conclusions, and not only know but be able to give the reasons why.

This message goes out with the prayer that all who read it may clearly see why these things of the world are always condemned by spiritually minded Christians, and seeing, may reach the same conclusions for their own lives.

J. E. CONANT.

IS THE DEVIL IN MODERN AMUSEMENTS?

THE first thing to do in a discussion of the card game, the dance, the theatre or the picture show, is to set forth the Scriptural principles by which these things are to be judged. Otherwise the discussion can end only in confusion and uncertainty, with each yielding to his own personal preferences rather than to Scripture or reason.

It is perfectly obvious that these four amusements belong somewhere in the field of moral values, because they affect the moral lives of all who engage in them.

There are only two realms of moral values: that of right and of wrong; of good and of bad; of the proper and the improper.

Everything in the realm of the morally good belongs to God, and all that is morally bad belongs to the devil.

All that belongs to God is the property of His Church, and that which is of the devil belongs to the world.

That which belongs to the Church, God uses to produce spiritual results, and anything He cannot use for that purpose belongs to the devil, not to the Church. That which belongs to the world, Satan uses to prevent spiritual results and to produce spiritual destruction. Anything he can't use for that purpose he isn't interested in.

By reminding himself of these things that are perfectly obvious, it is not difficult for the Christian to estimate the moral value of these four amusements, and place them

where they belong. These moral axioms point the way by which any Christian can judge what belongs to God, and what belongs to Satan. A true Christian will avoid everything that belongs to the devil, and cling to those things which belong to God.

But we must not stop with these conclusions to which logic and common sense lead us, we must turn to the Word of God to see what it has to say, for logic might lead us wrong, if we fail to start at the right place. The Word can never lead us wrong.

Many times it has been asked, "Where does the Bible say that cards, the dance or the theatre are wrong?"

The Bible does more than say that these particular things are wrong. It shows that everything in the realm where these are found, is wrong. So important is the subject, that it takes three chapters in which to set forth the principles involved. You will find the discussion in the eighth, ninth and tenth chapters of First Corinthians.

The question usually asked is, "Will the thing I do harm *me*?" These three chapters discuss the question: "Will the thing I do harm *my neighbor*?" The first question is utterly selfish. The other question is more like the Christian asks it.

The Corinthian Christians to whom Paul writes had but lately been heathen worshipers of idols. A part of the worship consisted of occasional feasts, in the idol temple, during which they ate food previously offered to the idol as a sacrifice.

Some of these Christians had friends, still pagan, who occasionally invited them to these feasts in the idol temple.

There were those who argued that since "an idol is nothing in the world," eating food first offered to an idol would not be wrong, because it does not harm the

one who eats it, whether in the idol temple or at home. Understanding that an idol "is nothing" freed them from the condemnation of conscience.

There are members in the churches today who put up that same argument regarding cards, the dance and the theatre. They say that these things are, to them, simply a means of innocent amusement and recreation. They receive no personal harm, so why not participate in them?

But Paul shows the Corinthians—and us—the fallacy, and the cruel selfishness, of such reasoning. He reminds them that there are many whom they influence, by what they do. Even though one *could* eat such food in a heathen temple with no harm to himself, he would at least *seem*, to some weak or ignorant brother, to be giving his approval to idol worship.

Paul shows them, therefore, that the question is not, "Will it harm *me* to eat in a heathen temple the food offered to idols?" but, "Will such action harm *someone else* by giving the impression that I approve of idol worship?"

A modern illustration will help to make this clear.

Those who recall saloon days, will remember that the saloon was so bad an institution that it had to be outlawed. It was a place where only those who had lost all self-respect, and cared nothing for the respect of others, were supposed to go.

Everyone who patronized the saloon, of course, sanctioned it as an institution in American life. Their patronage was their approval.

Saloons sold soft drinks as well as hard. They were said to serve the best lemonade that could be made.

Everyone knows there is no harm in lemonade. It is a very healthful drink.

Now suppose I had gone into a saloon and bought a lemonade, and, after drinking it, had gone right out again. Suppose I had done this every time I had wanted a lemonade.

It would remain eternally true that I had patronized, and therefore given my approval of, that institution of hell that sent millions to eternal ruin. My patronage would have been my sanction of its destructive work.

The question of my drinking lemonade in a saloon therefore becomes, not, "Would drinking lemonade do *me* any harm?" but, "Would drinking it in such a way as to approve of the saloon, do *someone else* any harm?" This is the same question precisely, set in a modern situation, that Paul answers for the Corinthians.

The principle behind all such questions is, therefore, easily seen. The Christian will never do anything that even *seems* to sanction a *bad institution.* A bad institution is one which, because of its inherent nature, morally harms those who come under its power and yield to its influence.

Guided by this principle set forth by Paul, every sincere Christian will avoid everything that is clearly wrong, or that is doubtful, or that is harmful to others. In other words, he will never do anything—

That is clearly *forbidden* in God's Word;

That is regarded as *doubtful* in its nature (since he is determined to avoid even the appearance of evil);

That is found, in the general experience of Christians, to be *harmful* to their own spiritual life, or their service for others;

That is *not expedient,* though not harmful to himself, because it leads others into harm;

That wipes out the *line of distinction* between the Church and the world; and,

That the *world* believes *Christians* should not do.

In the light of these principles of Christian living, it is easy to see that the church member who reasons: "The card game, the dance, and the theatre do *me* no harm, so why should *I* quit?" is first cousin to Cain, who murdered his brother and then asked: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Such church members say: "If there are those who are so ignorant they can't tell harm when they see it, or so weak that they can't get out of the way when it comes, why should that stop *me* from having *my* own pleasures?"

Those who talk like that have within them the seeds of the spirit of murder. For they say: "I'm going to have *my own* good times in *my own* good way, even if the weak and ignorant about me do land in hell as a result. Let them look out for themselves. The kind of life they live is their responsibility, not mine. You must not interfere with *my* pleasure just because someone is lost by watching and copying what *I* do."

Such a person would commit murder if given the right occasion. This is not the spirit of Him who "pleased not himself" (Rom. 15:3), and Paul tells us that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9).

On the basis of these fundamental Scriptural principles we can now see clearly the proper attitude of a true Christian toward any one of the amusements we are discussing. All that is necessary is to determine its character as an *institution.* "The tree is known by its fruit" (Matt. 12:33, R.V.). "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good

fruit" (Matt. 7:18). "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20).

If we find, because of their inescapable fruits, that these amusements are bad institutions, we will then have a means by which we can check up on our own spiritual condition.

Unsaved church members are not likely to see the point, even if they understand the reasoning. Instead, they are likely to think up an alibi and keep right on with their favorite amusements.

Real Christians, however, who put the Word of God and the spiritual welfare of others above all else, will not do anything in the future (whatever they have done in the past), that even *seems* to approve of these amusements, beginning with the moment they are convinced by the evidence that they are bad institutions.

I. THE CARD GAME

The card game is a game of chance. Experts tell us it is 97 per cent chance. This leaves only 3 per cent for skill.

The highest U. S. legal authority says: "Any game of chance [which, of course, includes cards in any form] that is played for a prize or a purse is gambling, and is punishable by a fine, or imprisonment, or both."

This interpretation is perfectly just and right, for it rests on the accepted definition of gambling. Getting that which belongs to another by *stealth* is stealing. Getting it by *violence* is robbery. Getting it by any method of *chance* is gambling.

It follows, therefore, that every church member who has played cards for any prize whatever, from the consolation prize up, is guilty of gambling, according to the highest legal authority of the nation.

This is why a grand jury reported as they did in Judge Harrison's court (Kentucky) some years ago.

They said: "A pink tea where society plays progressive euchre and gives prizes to the winners, has the same degrading influence as the gambling house, where roulette and poker are the attraction, the difference being only one of degree. It matters very little whether the prize is a silver thimble or a silver dollar. Progressive euchre parties are made alluring with prizes, refreshments, and a knowledge that the local papers will print the names of guests and winners. All are common gamblers and deserve to be fined."

Various other states have laws against games of chance based on the same unchangeable principle. Every game of cards for any prize of any nature is gambling.

There are those, however, who play cards merely as a pastime, and they imagine that no harm comes from the practice. But the facts tell a different story.

It has been found that nine-tenths of the gamblers start their gambling career in the "innocent," pastime parlor game, and that *eight-tenths* of them begin in the parlors of *church members!* What an awful indictment of those who profess to be in the work of rescuing, not wrecking, their fellow men.

John Philip Quinn, before he was saved, was one of the most expert professional gamblers in America. After his conversion, he said: "After all these years of experience and acquaintance with all the professional gamblers of this country, I can truly say, The parlor card table is the kindergarten of the gambler's hell." Quinn learned how to play cards in a home that professed to be Christian.

A converted saloon keeper testified in Ohio: "I do not believe the gambling den is nearly so dangerous, nor

does it do anything like the same amount of harm, as the social card party in the home. . . . Where do all the gamblers come from? They are not taught in the gambling dens. They learn somewhere else before they set foot inside such a place. When one has played in the parlor in the social game of the home, and has become proficient enough to win prizes among his friends, the next step is to seek out the gambling room, for he has learned and now counts on his efficiency to hold his own. The saloon men and gamblers chuckle and smile when they read in the papers of the parlor games given by the ladies, for they know that after a while those same men will become patrons of their business."

A prison worker took a picture, signed at the bottom, "With love, Mother," to her son in prison.

The son looked at it and said, after first remarking about the added wrinkles in her face:

"Take that picture back and give it to my mother, and tell her, 'Damn her!' I never want to see her again. She taught me to play cards. I killed a man at a gambling table and am serving fifteen years. Now she has the audacity to send me her picture after pushing me behind prison bars!"

A man who is now the pastor of a great church in Canada grew up in a minister's home. His parents, of course, never played cards and decidedly disapproved of them. But as a boy he learned how to play from boys whose parents belonged to his father's church. At first the boys played simply the pastime game. However, they soon began to play for pumpkin seeds, then for iron washers, then for pennies, then nickels, then dimes, and finally, dollars.

Still in his mid-teens, this young fellow often pilfered from the till of his employers to pay his gambling debts.

One night he sat in a gambling hell with three other young fellows, a six-shooter by the side of each, and $1,500 in the jack pot. Other terrible things were added to his gambling now and again, until his conversion. He is compelled now to look back on some of his best years worse than wasted, all because church members played cards and taught their boys how.

There is no need to multiply these sad and sordid stories. Wreck and ruin have always followed the card table—they always will. In the very nature of the case, any skill developed in playing a game that is 97 per cent chance, must be skill in trickery and cheating, with other things of a like nature growing out of it. Nor is there need to raise the question of whether the card game is a bad institution. The fruitage tells the story. A good tree could never bring forth such evil fruit.

The church member, who is a true Christian, therefore, can not give his approval to a game that must, in the nature of things, strew human wrecks along the pathway of life.

Yet, the devil delights to use church members to help him do this very thing, and many of them are so self centered they seem totally ignorant of the fact that they are giving the devil some of his best help. He will stop at nothing; he will even try to use the most noted Christians, if he can get them to fall for it.

At Monte Carlo, in Monaco, the grounds around the gambling hell were said to be the most beautiful in the world.

The owner once asked Spurgeon why he never came into his grounds to enjoy the beauty. Spurgeon said he had no money to spend in such a place, and did not feel justified in doing so.

The owner replied at once: "You make a great mis-

take. If it were not for the respectable people, like yourself and others, who come into the grounds, I should lose many of my customers. Many, who would not otherwise come in, would feel safe in following you into my gardens, and then it is easy to get them to the gaming tables."

In other words, that owner was brazen enough to try to get Spurgeon to become his decoy for luring innocent and unsuspecting souls to hell!

And yet, church members today, merely to satisfy their own selfish craving for cards, are allowing the devil to use them to decoy others into a game from which they may go into gambling, and finally into hell.

What will they say to Christ, when they meet Him? What about those whom He died to save, but whom they have ruined for all eternity, merely to gratify a craving for cards? If you are a church member, and play cards, what will *you* have to say to Him? Every alibi you now offer for playing cards will then tremble unspoken on your palsied lips, and burn in your guilty heart!

II. THE DANCE

The dance is founded and maintained on the natural attraction of sex, and upon *nothing else.*

One thing that proves it is its *origin.*

Dr. A. T. Pierson, a most reliable authority, traced the origin of the waltz to a Vienna theatre, where, he says, it was first seen Dec. 20, 1787, as an offspring of the licentious stage, and its consort, the ballet dance. "The waltz was for a time thought too shockingly indecent to be tolerated anywhere else. In time, it found its way into houses of ill fame, and more slowly, into German society. Even Paris, for a while, resisted its licentious

libertinism, and not till the 19th century did it get sanction in the famous French Capital."

T. A. Faulkner, a converted dancing master, found evidences of the waltz at an even earlier date, when it was introduced in 1627 by a French dancing master, named Gault, a licentious libertine who ruined many girls. He was executed by the guillotine, in 1632, for choking his own sister to death in an attempt to ruin her.

The physicians' magazine, "The Medical Review of Reviews," says that the dance as a stimulant to certain physical impulses has been known from time immemorial, and to this end it has been employed by man and beast.

Then the magazine quotes the "Source Book of Social Origins," by Thomas, as saying that without doubt "dancing came about as an aid to sex stimulation. As such it still exists undisguised among primitive peoples, and as such it existed among the peoples of antiquity. *It retains its original purpose among us today.*"

The one-step originated in the slum dance halls of Paris. From there it went to the slums of New York, then to the Barbary Coast and Red Light districts of San Francisco. It did not stop with the slums. It soon found its way into society that was supposed to be decent and refined. Opening the way for other dances that were worse, it became so tame beside the dances now in vogue that in 1929, the President of the American Society of Dancing Teachers said: "The dancing, approved now in high society, would not have been allowed in houses of ill fame a few years ago."

To make it unspeakably worse, this demon of lust is reaching out, through the dance, into our public schools, so that, in ever increasing numbers, our young people are being led to the slaughter.

The folk dances in our schools, under the camouflage

of "calisthenics," are nothing but the appetizers for waltz and tango. High school dances may easily be the road to moral ruin and hell, for they open the door to dancing schools and ballrooms.

It is amazing, almost beyond belief, that school boards over America are either so blind that they do not see where these things lead, or so cowardly that they fear to rise up and put them out of the schools.

In Sacramento, California, two earnest Christian parents insisted that their children should be excused from the folk dances. The school authorities refused, and expelled the children. The case, taken to court, received a verdict against the parents, but this was reversed by the State Supreme Court. A precedent thus established in that State, permitting parents to get their children excused from the folk dances, ought to be the case in every State.

Another proof of the immoral nature of the dance is its *history*.

The dance has always been maintained by throwing the sexes together. Separate them, compel those of each sex to dance by themselves, and the dance would pass out at once.

If the real object of the dance was healthful physical exercise and practice in the art of graceful movement, as some of the devil's dupes say it is, the men could be induced to dance by themselves, and the women would do the same thing. But no one has ever been idiot enough to try such a thing, and the reason is very simple. The dance *exists* to permit border-line sex contacts, not to promote physical grace and health.

Every married dancer knows this, and many others do too. If any married man should go into his parlor and find his wife in the same embrace of another man that

she is compelled to submit to on the dance floor, he would kick that man into the street, if nothing worse, and sue his wife for divorce. And any dancing woman, who found her husband in the same situation with another woman, would probably start a hair-pulling match and go to court for redress.

Why?

Everyone who knows anything about the dance knows why.

Because the pose necessary in dancing is the unspoken language of immodesty and impurity, Gail Hamilton, the writer, said: "The very pose of the parties suggests impurity."

Any decent, pure minded girl, when she learns what the dance embrace is intended to promote, will leave the dance forever, and any high minded young man will do the same.

A young woman in California said to the writer: "I dance all the time, and I've never had an improper thought on the dance floor in my life."

A mother standing near, with tears in her eyes over what the dance was doing to her son, spoke up and said: "Perhaps not, young woman, but what about the young mer you have danced with?" Without a further word to say the girl dropped her head in shame.

A fine, cultured young woman in Michigan, a church member, decided, after hearing the writer's message on amusements, that she was not saved, and came to Christ in the next service. She told the worker who led her into the light, "Dr. Conant was right. I have had awful thoughts on the dance floor."

Another proof that the dance is immoral is in the *purpose of its promoters.*

T. A. Faulkner, converted dancing master, knew the

inside of dance promotion before it became as bad as it is now. He said of its promoters, even at that time, that the principal stock in trade, the main asset of the dancing master, was the art of gaining improper control of a dancing partner.

Of course the ultimate object of all this is money. Anything goes, in these things of the world, that will increase the revenue. And so, even though there are dancing masters who do not deliberately plan the moral debauchery of their patrons, they will yet promote the business in such a way that debauchery follows. There is more money in it that way.

A group of dancing masters in Chicago once admitted this. They are quoted in a Chicago newspaper as saying: "We know the dances are rotten, but there is money in them." That is, no matter how characters are wrecked, what of it if it gets the money.

One other proof of the immoral nature of the dance is in *its continuous results.*

The matron of a home for fallen women in Los Angeles said: "Seven-tenths of the girls received here have fallen through dancing and its influence."

The New York Police Chief of a few years ago said: "Three-fourths of the abandoned girls of New York were ruined by dancing."

Prof. Faulkner talked personally with 200 fallen women, at one time, and found that 163 of them were ruined by dancing schools and ballrooms.

Archbishop Spaulding of New York, said: "Nineteen of every twenty of the fallen women who come to the confessional ascribe their fall from virtue to the dance."

There are said to be 200,000 fallen women in this country now, and 60,000 are led astray every twelve months through dancing alone.

Because of such facts as these, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* said in an editorial: "The trouble with 'questionable dancing' is that there is nothing questionable about it—it is unquestionably bad. . . . The characteristic of the present dance degradation is that it attacks most virulently the very young."

And now, to speed up the work of ruin, dance orchestras are furnishing "obscene music," as Arthur T. Cremin calls it. Mr. Cremin, President of the American Creative League of Music Students, and a director of the New York School of Music, says that much of the dance music being played today is "just as demoralizing as the most pornographic (licentious) literature. It is intended to arouse the baser instincts, and the most sinister thing about it is that the listeners do not realize the effect it is producing on them. Even classic music can be orchestrated to produce the same effects as the soft, languorous, intoxicating type of dance tune."

Some believe there is no harm in private dances with a selected company. They tell us it is the associations, not the dance itself, from which the harm comes.

How can change of associations change the laws of human nature? The only possible way to escape the influence of the dance is to stay away from the dance. How can anyone take fire into his hands and not be burned?

Mr. Faulkner once asked Prof. Stribes what the best move would be to crush out the dance, and he answered: "It lies with the church and the parents. If the reform workers would start where the vice germinates and crush it there, they would soon wipe it out. But as long as public school rooms are used to teach the rudiments of prostitution by having dancing taught, there will be prostitutes. Most ministers, even, haven't enough courage to

condemn dancing, for fear they will offend some of their members."

God pity the ministers whom that describes! And God pity the church members and decent people on the school boards who permit the rudiments of prostitution to be taught in their schools!

Is there any need to question the nature of such an institution? "Bad" is a tame word to describe it.

No church member who is a real Christian will do anything that even seems to give approval. Even a civic minded citizen will act to get it out of the public schools, lest he should be guilty of starting unsuspecting boys and girls on the road to hell.

When the famous Barbary Coast in San Francisco was closed, 5,000 dissipated, diseased, bloated, blasted, wrecked and ruined girls were literally turned into the streets—an awful, heart-rending sight to all who saw it.

Think of the heart broken loved ones, the empty chairs in thousands of homes from which these once pure and lovely girls had gone! Then multiply this by thousands of homes all over the land where the same thing is true today.

Then, with the knowledge that at least three-fourths of these girls were ruined by the dance, you will know why church members who stand up for such an institution are called hypocrites by the world.

III. THE THEATRE

The theatre, as a commercialized institution, is morally rotten to the core, and this has been its nature from the beginning.

Macaulay, the historian, says: "From the time the theatres (in England) were opened, they became seminaries of vice. Nothing charmed the depraved audience

so much as to hear lines grossly indecent repeated by a girl supposed not yet to have lost her innocence."

The fact that the theatre can never be anything but immoral is shown in numerous ways.

One is that it *defies reform.*

Over and again attempts have been made at reformation, but they have always failed. Garrick, Hannah More, Macready, Henry Irving, Edwin Booth, all tried it from the inside. Dr. Channing and Lyman Beecher tried it from the outside. They all got exactly nowhere.

Why?

Let the play writer, M. Dumas, the younger, tell you. In writing to a friend, he advised: "Do not take your daughter to the theatre. It is not merely the *work* that is immoral, it is the *place*. . . . The theatre must forever be immoral."

Every theatre in Philadelphia, after the first ones opened, was started in a spasm of moral reform, but they all descended, one after another, to the level of the rest.

A company of high minded people in New York tried reform by building their own play house and running it on a high standard. In a little over two years they had to quit, after they had lost over $400,000. It cost them nearly half a million dollars to find out that the theatre cannot be reformed.

Macready, the actor, said: "None of my children, with my consent, shall ever enter a theatre, or have any visiting connection with actors and actresses."

Olga Nethersole, the actress, said: "The only kind of play that can hope to meet with success among English speaking people at the present date is the play that is sufficiently indicated by calling it immoral." That was before plays were as bad as they are now.

Dr. J. M. Buckley, Methodist editor, read 200 plays

given in one season in New York, and only four were fit to be read to his family.

These things, all of them said by those who knew what they were talking about, tell with unmistakable clearness why the theatre cannot be reformed. The reason is very simple.

The moment the improper, immoral and criminal suggestiveness is reformed out of the plays, the box office receipts go down until the doors have to be closed. That is, it takes the portrayal of filth and crime to keep the doors open.

Any child can see that it is impossible to reform the filth out of an institution that must have filth to run it, and yet keep the institution running at the same time. *Of course such an institution cannot be reformed!* Anyone who objects to nakedness, profanity and obscenity in the plays becomes, to the theatrical profession, a "fanatic" bent on destroying the amusement of the people—a person to be howled down with abuse.

For this reason the famous Copley theatre in Boston had to close a few years ago. It used only clean plays, but finally there were not enough clean plays produced to keep the doors open.

Another evidence that the theatre is immoral is that it *degrades the audience.*

Any institution that is compelled to present sin as a joke and immorality and crime as entertainment, can only degrade those who look on.

Not only the display of their persons, especially on the part of actresses, but also many of the things seen and heard in the plays, could not be talked about promiscuously by the men and women of the audience, without moral indecency, and so they cannot be seen without a degrading effect on character.

Charles M. Bregg, dramatic critic of a great Pittsburgh daily, said of the theatre: "It represents in some aspects the most violent worldliness, the most flaunting immorality, the most defiant sin and the most vicious influence. It seduces and corrupts under our very eye."

Many church members, willing to agree with Mr. Bregg as far as the ordinary theatre is concerned, are, however, sure that grand opera is so refined, so dignified and so cultural that it is in a class by itself, and that the plays are such that church members can properly attend.

M. Boucicault, a play writer, as he describes the contents of "Norma," "Rigoletto," "Faust," "La Traviata" and others, reveals that they are all so viciously immoral that were it not for the beautiful music, and the foreign language in which the librettos are sung, they would be driven from the stage.

The producers of the opera "Salome" said it had a good influence second only to a sermon, and yet it is full of filth.

A metropolitan opera singer who gave a recital of "Salome," surprised that its immorality should be called in question, is quoted as saying: "We either have to have these immoral stories or go without grand opera."

In his report of this opera, one dramatic critic said: "There was little that had not been equaled or surpassed in frankness in other operas which are accepted as a matter of course." That is, they are all alike, filthy.

Even if everything in grand opera were decent and proper, *it is still the theatre*, and to attend is thereby to patronize and approve of all the filth for which the institution stands.

Mr. E. M. Holland, an eminent comedian in New York,

gave a very revealing testimony to the degrading effect of the theatre on character. He said:

"When I have a night off I go down to the Bowery, and there I see the people who used to come to see the Shakespearean plays ten or twelve years ago. They have gone steadily down the line."

The theatre also *debauches the actors.*

The plays themselves have an influence on the actors they cannot escape. It is a law of nature that we come to be like that which we habitually imitate.

The one who would successfully act the villain or the vampire must *be* a villain or a vampire, as far as possible, not only in acting, but even in thought. There is no escape from the influence on one's character in playing such parts.

The intimate associations, also, into which actors and actresses are compelled to be thrown by the nature of their employment, have even a more debauching influence.

Mr. Clement Scott, a leading theatrical critic of the London press, was asked for his mature convictions about the theatre as a place for a pure minded girl to make a living, and he said:

"A woman *may* take a header into a whirlpool and be miraculously saved—but then she may be drowned. One out of a hundred may be safe; but even then she must hear things she had better not listen to and see things she had better not see. It is nearly impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession. Everything is against her, and what is more to be deplored is that a woman who endeavors to keep her purity is almost of necessity doomed to failure in her career. It is an awful thing to say, but it is still more

awful that it is true; but no one who knows the life of the green-room will deny it."

Agnes Souret, actress, once called the most beautiful woman in Europe, said about the theatre: "There is not enough money or fame in the world to make up for the price a woman pays when she sells her beauty by way of the stage or the screen."

And Agnes Souret knew, for her published nakedness had told the story of a soul stripped of that womanly modesty that makes a woman's charms inviting and her fidelity to virtue glorious.

It is no wonder, therefore, that a great majority of actors and actresses are said to depart from the paths of virtue. How could anything else be expected?

And it is not because they are weak, but simply because they are normal human beings forced into intimate situations that no normal human beings can withstand. They would have to be devoid of natural human instincts to resist the influences their employment forces them into. The steady stream of sordid divorce tales that keeps coming from their ranks tells all too plainly what their employment does to them.

And yet church members who pose as Christians are willing to endorse, by their patronage, a business that of necessity wrecks the morals of most of its employees! All decent people protested for many years against the saloon because it wrecked the morals of employees and patrons alike. Finally the nation rose up and outlawed it. Yet even church members patronize another institution that is doing the same thing, by a different method, simply because their selfish hearts demand dramatic and spectacular presentations. It is hardly possible to think of such people as Christians.

There are church members, so determined to patronize

the theatre, that they fix up an alibi, talking eloquently about the "good" that comes from a "moral" or "religious" play. They tell us the theatre began in the church as the "handmaid of religion," and that such plays can be made to serve the same purpose today.

It is perfectly true that the drama, in its earliest form, was a ritual performance, and that it was introduced for religious purposes. However, it is also true that its essential nature, from the beginning, was pagan, not Christian. It could not then and cannot now be Christian. God's method of producing spiritual results is not by the external presentation of make-believe dramatic spectacles, but by the internal, unseen operation of the Holy Spirit. It is not by emotional appeals through the natural eyes, but by spiritual appeals through the eyes of the heart that spiritual truth comes to be known.

Aristotle showed clearly that, though produced in the theatre under the direction of the priest, the effect of drama in that day was only degrading in its nature. It could not have been otherwise, it cannot be now, for God never uses any means for accomplishing spiritual results which *He has not appointed for that purpose.*

The only dramatic presentations of spiritual truth that God ever appointed for His Church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. His presence is in these very simple yet comprehensive dramatic displays of the truths of redemption, and He uses them to impress the heart with saving truth. He has appointed no other dramatic presentations in the church.

Even pageants do not belong in the church. If secular in nature, they are obviously out of place. If intended to produce spiritual results, they cannot possibly do so, for pageantry is a complete reversal of God's method for getting such results. How can He be in it?

As to "good moral plays" accomplishing any spiritual results, a dramatic critic of a well known paper was not as blind on this subject as many church members. He said, "The theatre as a forum of morals is a joke, convincing nobody who is not already convinced. An honest sermon by an honest expounder of the Word is worth, as a moral catholicon, all the happy endings that ever turned any play into a lie."

Sir Arthur Pinero, the wisest of playwrights, said that the exhibition of the most miserable of his transgressing heroines never deterred a woman from doing what her baser instincts told her to do.

As to the so-called "religious" play, probably the Passion Play stands at the top of the list, and in more ways than one.

Dr. S. E. Wishard, having first studied the matter from every angle, said that this dramatization of the crucifixion was the most stupendous act of sacrilege that could be devised. That any sinful man should consent to impersonate the divine Redeemer in the very act of purchasing our redemption seemed to him almost past belief. That this should be conceived of as a Christian performance seemed equally incredible.

"The American Evangelist," commenting on the Passion Play, said: "To the spiritually minded, the very attempt to dramatize the atonement is in itself an impiety, and their gate receipts suggest the price of the Potter's Field. . . . The net result upon actors and observers can only be a weakening of the divine appeal of the Cross and a blurring of the line between the holy and the profane."

Spiritual results can *never be obtained* except through the work of the *Holy Spirit* on the heart. The Holy Spirit *never works* through any means God has *not appointed*,

and certainly not through such an institution as the theatre, or anything that can even remotely sanction the theatre. The imagined spiritual results from seeing a "moral" or "religious" play are therefore nothing but the stirring of surface emotions, with the beholder left farther from God after it is all over.

This is why the Church Fathers, Cyprian, Tertullian and others, in the days immediately following the Apostles, sounded the strongest possible warning against the theatre, and condemned church members unsparingly who attended. The churches themselves also denounced the drama with uncompromising vehemence.

For this same reason, churches today that are determined to stay clear of the world will not only condemn the theatre without compromise, but will avoid all pageantry in the church, because the pageant can so easily become an appetizer for the theatre.

Of course, there will always be members in the churches whom the devil will catch as monkeys are caught in Algiers. The peasants hollow out a gourd, leaving a hole just large enough to admit a monkey's paw with fingers straight, and then make the gourd fast. Rice is put in the gourd. The monkey puts his paw in, closes it around the rice, but can't get it out while he holds on. Not being willing to let go of the rice to release himself, he is caught. The peasant then does with him as he pleases.

Just so, a church member will grasp the theatre, the card game, the dance, and as long as he holds on, the devil has him captive to use in his business of leading others astray. He is caught in the devil's monkey-gourd.

"Good moral" and "religious" plays are his most effective traps. They capture more people than the downright evil plays. For this he uses church members most effec-

tively. It is a terrible thing to see the devil get so much of his best help from his professed enemies!

IV. THE PICTURE SHOW

The stage is bad enough, God knows, but the screen is far worse in its effects. Not only does it reach many times more people, since picture shows are everywhere, but it makes many more criminals. It reaches millions of children and youths in their impressionable and formative years, and gives them twisted, degrading and criminal ideas of life before they have a chance to form correct moral judgments.

By the very nature of its influence, *crime is the chief contribution of the picture show to American life.*

Roger Babson, the outstanding fact finder of the nation, says that two-thirds of the crime and lawlessness of the United States can be traced to the moving picture theatres.

In 1908 the average age of criminals in this country was 32 years. By 1918 it had come down to 22 years. Now it is the later 'teens, with the most atrocious crimes committed by boys not yet 20 years old. The first six months of 1933, the largest number of arrests were of 19-year-old boys. The chief culprit in the production of this terrible wreckage of young life is the picture show.

In a recent survey running across four years, which was both thorough and impartial, as to the effect of the picture show, it was found that pictures, according to the report, "exert a profound influence on the habits and behavior of children."

The *New York World* said: "Thousands of cases of crime and vice can be traced to the morbid and demoralizing influence of the picture show."

The book, "Our Movie-Made Children," tells many

heartbreaking effects of the movies upon the youth of our country.

It reports that in a certain thorough investigation, over thirty major forms of crime methods, learned by seeing the movies, were confessed by a company of 17-year-old boys waiting trial.

Of the convicts studied, twenty per cent said that the movies had taught them the ways and means in theft and robbery.

Of 252 delinquent girls, 54 per cent stayed away from school to go to the movies. Over one-third of them had trouble with their parents over movie attendance, and about twenty per cent of them had run away from home after trouble from that cause.

Many girls and young women who had gone wrong, admitted that the movies had made them dissatisfied with their own clothes and manner of living, and had started them out to achieve motion picture standards. Trouble had resulted.

This investigation stated that the road to moral delinquency "is heavily dotted with movie addicts, and obviously it needs no crusaders, or preachers, or reformers to come to this conclusion."

Anyone at all capable of consistent and serious thinking cannot fail to see numerous reasons for this.

One perfectly obvious reason is the *accumulating effect* of impressions received, especially by the young, in their very frequent attendance at the shows.

Not many children are naturally inclined to vice or crime. Thousands would never go into them if they did not form the habit of thinking in such terms as they watch the scenes that flit across the screen.

It is an inescapable law of human nature that evil suggestions which are not accepted at first, will, if fre-

quently repeated, be yielded to at last; first uneasily, then more willingly, and finally with a dulled and consenting conscience.

This is especially true of the young, who are not safeguarded by correct and well established moral judgment. Nothing sets forth this law of nature any better than the familiar lines of Pope in his "Essay on Man":

> "Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
> That to be hated needs but to be seen;
> But seen too oft, familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

Will Hays, the moving picture czar, gave an address a few years ago on "Motion Pictures," at a dinner tendered to him in New York by the publishers of the United States.

In his speech he accepted for the picture show industry the responsibility for showing, for the sake of the youth of America, "the right kind of pictures," as he called them, by which he meant clean pictures.

As his fundamental reason for accepting this responsibility, he gave this very law of human nature which Pope has set in these lines, and pleaded for help in attempting to clean up the industry. Because of the inescapable effects, especially on the young, of vicious pictures, and speaking of the 20,000,000, one-half or more of them children, who go to the shows every day, he said:

"They come with no other preoccupation; they come indeed in a mood which has deliberately put out of their minds all other distractions. They come not out of duty, as they go to work or to school; they come not out of solicitation, as they go to political or other public meetings; they come out of their own wish and inclination. They come, in short, in a mood of relaxation, of reception

—in precisely that state of mind and emotion in which a master psychologist, a great teacher, would want them to come, having in mind the desire to make the strongest impression upon them; in the most plastic state for receiving and holding impressions."

No one could have presented a stronger or more appealing natural reason for helping to clean up the picture shows. But the amazing thing about it is that Will Hays seemed to be so wholly blind to what human nature in sin is really like. Apparently he actually *thought it could be done!*

It is no wonder that the editor of the humorous magazine, "Judge," gave him the laugh, a few weeks later, throwing in a little sarcasm for good measure.

"'Clean up the movies' is the slogan of Elder Will Hays, of the First Presbyterian Church, of Sullivan, Ind., who happens for the moment to be dictator of the moving picture business in America.

"Elder Hays is a grand little man, and his aspiration is beautiful to see, but it is a bit under-engined. The movies will not clean up—not much. . . . You can't clean up the movies without giving them voice, color, character, wisdom and distinction.

"The minute intelligence is injected into them, the movie audience wanders away, bored to a crisp and delicious brown. The movie is dirty because it is a low order of entertainment, appealing to one sense only, requiring merely action to carry its message. And action makes an appeal to the mind that reduces reasoning to its lowest terms. . . . To clean up the movies is like going at a leopard with kalsomine."

How amazing that the editor of a worldly magazine should see this, while church members and even ministers remain totally blind!

It turned out, naturally enough, that the attempts to clean up the shows only made a bad matter worse. J. Ray Johnson says in *The Christian Century:*

"Groups of men and women, representing the better elements of society, protested vigorously and tried by legislation and otherwise to control the screen, but the more sharply the protest was made, the more luridly the producers advertised their wares, and the greater the throngs that flocked to the picture palaces.

"It became known that all that was necessary to insure great crowds was to obtain the condemnation of the newspapers and the clergymen, and to have the pictures publicly branded as immoral."

Of course! With fallen human nature what it is, how could it be expected to be otherwise?

Spurgeon was once in a humble cottage in which the floor looked fearfully dirty. He wondered why it was not scrubbed. Upon looking more carefully, he noticed that the floor was the ground itself. The more such a floor is scrubbed, the worse it will get.

Exactly so with the picture shows. The greater the effort to clean them up, the dirtier they are sure to become.

Another evil influence of the screen lies in its effects on the mental powers and vital energies.

Educators all over the land say that the pictures "unsettle the brain from real work, and put the mind of both old and young into such a condition as to make it impossible to do any hard, concentrated thinking."

Dr. Sanger Brown, II, chairman of the New York State Commission on mental defectives, said:

"To go and sit for hours on end watching a procession of visual images that are poured into the brain, is the equivalent of bringing up a spoon-fed mind."

Of their lack of recreational value, especially for children, Prof. G. T. W. Patrick says in his book, "The Psychology of Relaxation":

"In no sense can moving pictures be included in forms of relaxation for children. On the contrary, their effect is to speed up a mental life already under too much stimulation. The concentration of attention, ever mined by the plot interest and by the rapidity of the changing scenes, is an effect quite the opposite of that which recreation and relaxation seek to attain."

The moral, mental and physical influence of the screen, therefore, especially on children, is lacking in those values that have any meaning in life, and is even productive of harm.

Not only the cumulative influence, but also the actual *illustrations of crime* indicate another reason why the screen fosters crime.

"That which enters the mind through the eye never comes out," is an accepted observation. And when that which enters through the eye actually shows youth how to commit crime, what can the effect be but crime?

The *Chicago Tribune* made a canvass at random of school children to find the effect on them of picture shows, and it was found that out of 268 children talked with, 188 had received bad views of life's duties, and 40, views of no value. So here lies the pathway to the final crack-up of American culture and decent society.

Out of 246 were 169 who were taught lack of respect for authority. Good prospects, these, for the anarchists a few years hence.

Out of 213 were 151 who had been taught too mature notions of sex life; of 155 there were 108 who had already received damage to their modesty and purity; of 145 there were 99 who had been taught disregard of the

marriage ties. That is, the picture shows are heading this nation for the rocks of moral degeneracy.

The *Detroit News* said:

"Are we reaching a point of national decadence that will permit every form of vice to be paraded before even children—chief patrons of the residential motion picture house? . . . The child mind is presented with the most degraded of all life under the flimsy pretext that there is a moral hidden somewhere in the filth paraded over the celluloid. . . . There in the darkened theatres the young of our city are having displayed before their eyes all that any sane mother or father would shield them from."

Professor Dale, of Ohio State University, checked up on 115 films taken at random. He found that the audiences were entertained with 71 deaths pictured in 45 films, and 406 crimes accomplished and 43 attempted in the whole 115 films.

The *New York World* said of the picture theatre before it was as bad as it is now:

"We consider the moving picture show as it is run today as one of the most virulent centers of moral infection there is. . . . Here may be thrown on the screen, in the most realistic manner, every crime in the calendar, enacted as if in real life. Can any one doubt what the effect of such an exhibition can be?"

Only those who deliberately refuse to accept the abundant testimony of a host of competent witnesses.

Another reason why the picture shows help to produce criminals is that they *challenge* the youths of the audience to go out and commit crimes they have seen portrayed.

Every normal, healthy boy has the spirit of adventure. The screen pictures adventures in crime. It makes crime

look easy. Many a boy is thus led to go out of the show and try it. Finding he can get by with it, he starts on a career of crime. Thus the thrill of adventure, if nothing else, adds another criminal to the growing list, taught how in the picture show.

Seventeen safes had been cracked in a certain district in Chicago. The safe-crackers were finally brought in. The police captain, looking up from his desk, saw four school boys from the same school, two of them 13, one 15, and the leader 16.

Asked in amazement if they had done those jobs, the leader said boastfully:

"Sure! We did all those jobs. Seventeen—maybe it was eighteen. And we did it better than the guy in the picture, too. He had to use some nitro, but we bored some holes and the knobs pulled off. . . . I guess we got maybe a thousand bucks."

And yet parents, who would be crushed to earth if their own boys were involved in such a thing, will patronize and sanction the very institution that is daily leading other mothers' boys into it! What can be the spirit of such parents?

The biggest challenge, however, to the spirit of adventure is found in the "good plays" which "teach a moral," in which the villain always suffers and the virtuous are rewarded. No plays present a greater challenge to adventurous boys than these.

In the first place, a wide awake boy will always see or think he sees how he could do the crime portrayed and not get caught. He will call the criminal in the picture who is caught a fool or an idiot, and then go out to commit the "perfect crime."

And in the next place, there is nothing to restrain him. The Holy Spirit alone can deter a sinful soul, youth or

adult, from making an evil choice, and since He never uses such an evil agency as the theatre, the restraints from the warnings in the picture are all off. A warning from such a source is nothing but a joke.

So it turns out that the "good" picture that "teaches a moral" or "gives a warning" becomes a tremendous challenge to the spirit of adventure, and crime too often follows.

The most serious reason, however, for regarding the picture theatre as an agency of evil is the *ridicule* heaped upon sacred things in the pictures.

Many of the pictures set forth true romance, as our godly fathers and mothers knew it, as too tame for words. Romance on the screen must include a little sly unfaithfulness to marriage vows for spice.

Decent and self controlled men are set forth as cowards, and criminals are made to be heroes. The crook is exploited for a laugh, stealing is a lot of fun, and swearing is made entertaining.

The silly, smoking, drinking, swearing, shocking girl is the regular fellow, the home is a bore, and the store, the shop and the office are drudgery.

The minister is a pious fool, the church is a misty memory of those funny Sunday School days, God is little more than a convenient swear word, and hell—well, there is no such place, and heaven is the biggest joke of all.

Thus is the picture show steadily robbing us of all that is sacred and worth while in life.

"The nations that forget God shall perish," says God's Word, and the picture theatre is fast speeding up this nation's forgetfulness of God, as Hollywood increasingly justifies the reputation of being a close second to Sodom and Gomorrah.

By this time some reader may be saying that this indictment of the picture theatre is dictated by prejudice and highly overdrawn. He never sees such pictures as are here described, and refuses to believe they exist.

Such a reader may have seen only the less objectionable offerings in the smaller towns and cities, where there is still left sufficient sense of decency to keep the more vicious pictures out. Even so, some films suggestive of crime and immorality get through to the screens of the smallest towns and villages, even though some of the most vicious are kept out.

But this is only one side of the question. The children and youths in the smaller towns will hardly stay there all their lives, and the grown folks also go to the city now and then. The small town pictures thus become the open door to the city shows, many of which feature filth and vice in the most alluring form.

Even these considerations, however, do not reach the fundamental issue. The basic principle we are studying lies behind all this, and must be applied to the problem before it can be solved. Follow its application.

A theatre is a *theatre*, whether in village or city, and whether the plays are presented on stage or screen.

As such, it is an institution in American life.

It is either a good or a bad institution, as measured by its dominant influence.

Overwhelming testimony, of which the above is only the most meager sample, proves its influence, especially that of the picture theatre, to be destructive of moral character and productive of crime and immorality, both in patrons and employees.

Such fruitage indicts it as a bad institution.

Patronage of the theatre *anywhere* is approval of it

everywhere, just as patronage of any saloon in the smallest village would have been the sanction of the whole damnable institution throughout the nation.

A real Christian will never sanction, nor do anything that will even seem to sanction, a bad institution. Instead, he will, like Paul, be filled with such compassion for those about him that he will do nothing to cause even the weakest for whom Christ died to stumble, that he may not "sin against Christ," as Paul said (I Cor. 8:11, 12). He will always be careful to "abstain from all appearance of evil" (I Thes. 5:22), lest he become responsible before God for the eternal ruin of a never-dying soul.

This principle also covers the card game and the dance, as any one who gives it any thought can see, and is God's answer to the whole amusement problem, being the principle Paul lays down for us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. (I Corinthians, chapters 8 to 10.)

Paul also covers the whole problem in another way by what he says to the Colossians (Col. 3:17). "Whatsoever ye do in *word* or *deed*, do *all* in the *name* of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Those first seven words cover everything *said* and *done* in a Christian's life, and the rest of the verse excludes everything that cannot be done *in the name of Christ with thanksgiving*. That is, if any of these amusements are proper for the Christian, he will then be able to ask God to bless him as he engages in them, and make him a blessing to others by means of them.

If any one thinks he can do this, let him try it. And if he cannot, he will then know that his attitude toward them should be one of condemnation and abhorrence, since he cannot possibly do these things in the name of Christ. He will know also that a friend of the world is the enemy of God (see James 4:4), and that "If any

man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15).

Agreeing with all this, however, there are still people who will say: "I go only to the clean pictures. What is wrong with that?"

Every such person who is honestly determined to live a consistent Christian life, will see what is wrong with it as soon as he is helped to apply the principle to that particular aspect of the problem.

The "clean pictures" are simply bait with which the devil attracts church members into the theatre, that he may thus use them as decoys to allure others, who follow their example, toward moral ruin and hell. Putting sugar into arsenic does not kill the poison. Seeing only the "clean pictures" is as much of a sanction of the theatre as an institution, as buying only a lemonade in a saloon would have been approval of the saloon as an institution. It is the simple principle in law of "particeps criminis," which means, "partaker in crime."

Seeing any pictures at all in any theatre makes the church member a partaker in the crime of moral ruin brought upon both patrons and employees by its nature as an institution.

Think also of the employees of the theatre. Recall the competent testimony in the preceeding chapter of that eminent theatrical critic of the London press, Mr. Clement Scott. He said that one out of a hundred women might be morally safe in that employment, with the inference that the other ninety-nine would almost certainly go morally wrong. And the influence on film employees is at least as bad, and the attack on their morals as destructive.

This forces on the church member who sees only "clean pictures" a solemn question.

Would you like a loved one, a brother or sister, son or daughter, to go into the employ of an institution in which one out of a hundred *might* be morally safe, with the odds all against the other ninety-nine? Or even if the odds were only fifty-fifty?

If not, then what can you think of yourself if, after knowing these facts, you continue to pay your money at the box office to an institution in whose employment the morals of loved ones in other families cannot escape being assaulted and broken down? Will you not be guilty before God as a partaker in this crime? Would you like your loved ones helped to moral ruin by others? What about the Golden Rule?

It is not a question here of your good intentions. They may be the very best. It is simply a question of your sanction and approval of such an institution by giving it your money and patronage, instead of condemning it, refusing your patronage, and using all your influence against it.

This brings up another question that cannot be escaped.

You are a church member. That is, you profess to be a Christian—to have been born again.

If you have been, then the love of Christ has been shed abroad in your heart, and the Holy Spirit will constrain you, not merely to natural human sympathy, but to the exercise of the very love of Christ Himself for those about you.

Does such love possess and control you? It is easy to find out.

Real love is that spontaneous, unforced attitude of the whole being that puts the best interests of those we love above our own, no matter at what cost to ourselves.

God so loved that it cost Him all He had. Do you love those for whom Christ died like that?

If you do, you will count it all joy to put the eternal interests of others above any selfish desire you might have for mere entertainment, and all these amusements will at once slip out of your life as the bad institutions they are, because the love of Christ will constrain you to put the spiritual welfare of others, not your own pleasure, in first place.

Another thing will also happen. You will no longer say: "I will go only where I can take Christ with me," but, "I will go only where *Christ takes me.*" You will remember that there is nothing in Scripture about Christ following us around where *we* want to go. Instead, He takes us where *He* wants us to go. We are *His* followers; He is not ours. And He takes us only where we can *represent Him.* Therefore if we ever go to any of these amusements, it will be to bear our testimony to Him. And if that is impossible in such a place, He has not taken us there. We have left Him behind and gone without Him.

You can go to a card game, a dance or a theatre with your testimony for Christ, if the Lord opens the way and leads you to give it, and you will at least be respected, even if your testimony seems to go unheeded, *unless you become a participant.* If that should happen, you would get only what you had asked for if they all called you a hypocrite.

This covers the answer to the question as to whether the love of Christ for the lost is really shed abroad in your heart.

But some one may persist with one more question. "If we give these things up, what is there to meet our social and recreational needs? What about the really educational films that are to be seen in the picture theatre once in a while? What is there to take the place of the worth while things? Must we forfeit all of it?"

The first answer. There are many social and recreational activities which do not blast and wreck the moral characters of their patrons and employees—things that are wholesome and of real worth, which have no connection whatever with these amusements.

But even if there were not, *that would be no excuse* for Christians so to deny their profession as to become partakers in the crimes of the world, thus helping on the moral wreckage and eternal ruin of those we ought to be seeking to save.

The second answer. What little real *recreational* value there might otherwise be in any of these amusements is offset, many times over, by their inescapable fruitage of immorality and crime. And besides, there can be no proper *social* values for a real Christian in contact with the great mass of those whose joys are found in these things.

The third answer. The churches everywhere are more responsible than they might be willing to admit for the worldliness among their members. Most of the churches have thrown their hands up to the world in the care of the social life of their people.

Time once was when the churches were social centers, not only for their own members and their friends, but often, at least in the smaller places, for nearly the whole community. Time ought to be again when the churches would go back to an adequate social program, at least for their own members and their friends.

Man is a social being, with cravings that can be satisfied only in congenial social contacts and activities. No one loses these needs when he becomes a Christian. If the churches should awaken to this need and plan a social and recreational program that would be wholesome in nature and soul winning in fruitage, there would then be

no excuse for their young people going to the world for the things their social natures crave.

The final answer. Our Christian profession leads the world to expect more of us than some church members expect of themselves. We all profess that Christ fully satisfies, and the world knows it. Then they see us come back into the world for these amusements. That becomes to them an acknowledgment that we still have certain cravings which Christ *does not* satisfy. So they can only conclude that the Christian profession is simply a beautiful theory that does not work, and thus we hasten them on their way to eternal ruin.

Every church member who reads these pages will either see the principles set forth, or he will not.

Let those who do, and who therefore reach the conclusions arrived at and accept them as their own, use every means within their power to give the church members about them who need it, the same light they have, thus helping to win them back to consistency with their profession, and power with God in life and service.

Let those who do not reach these conclusions do some serious heart searching before God, determined to make sure whether their interest in the enemy that crucified Christ and seeks to nullify their testimony to Him, indicates that they have never been born again, or that their spiritual condition, if they are really saved, is that of backslidden Christians whose lives belie their profession and deny the Lord who bought them.